



OFFICE OF THE
COMMISSIONER OF RAILROADS
STATE OF WISCONSIN

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Before proceeding with the rough crossing process the OCR encourages the municipality to connect with the railroad regarding the crossing. The OCR can help facilitate communication with the railroad and help put the municipality in touch with the right railroad personnel. Often this communication can avert the need to go through the formal complaint and hearing process.

Rough crossing repairs. Section 86.12 of state law requires the railroad to maintain all at-grade crossings in good condition for travel. If the railroad fails to do so the city can enforce this law through the Office of the Commissioner of Railroads (OCR). The statute requires a two-step process.

First, the governing body of the municipality must pass a resolution demanding the repairs and serve that on the railroad. The railroad then has 30 days under the statute to repair the crossing. If they fail to do so, then the municipality may file a formal complaint with the OCR. The filing of the formal complaint must also be authorized by the local governing body.

However, the governing body may either pass two separate resolutions or include authorization to the municipal staff to file the complaint in the original resolution if the railroad fails to repair the crossing. A sample resolution for the combined complaint can be found in the FAQ section of the OCR's website.

Once the OCR receives the formal complaint we schedule a hearing to take testimony on the complaint. The hearing is typically held in the complaining municipality. At the hearing, the municipality has to demonstrate that the railroad has not kept the crossing "in good condition and repair for highway travel". This showing is often made using photos of the crossing (sometimes with a ruler/tape measure if there is a difference in elevation between the rail and the roadway surface. Testimony could also include the number of complaints the City has received about the crossing or that the crossing feels rough when driving over it.

The testimony is usually given by the municipal engineer or Director of Public Works, but can also be given by local elected officials and individual residents.

After the hearing, the OCR decides whether the crossing requires repairs and if so, orders the railroad to repair the crossing by a date certain.

Feel free to contact the OCR directly with any questions.